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Group Therapy/ The Cloth and Paper Issue

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Group Therapy

Column Editor, **Rosann Bazirjian** (Syracuse University)

We're still looking for gripes and issues! Is there anything you need to get off your chest? This includes Publishers and Vendors too! Tell Rosann Bazirjian at Syracuse University, LIBRVB@SUVM.bitnet or FAX (315) 443-9510.

The Cloth and Paper Issue

Please send gripes and anything else you need to get off your chest to Rosann Bazirjian, Syracuse University, LIBRVB@SUVM.Bitnet or FAX (315)443-9510.

Gripe:

Submitted by **Jim Deffenbaugh** (AUL for Collection Development and Preservation, College of William and Mary)

Over the past several years, I have noticed an increasing price differential in the hardback and paperbound editions of the same titles with the same imprint.

I surveyed one year's worth of *Choice* and often found, for titles appearing in both formats, that the hardbound was priced more than three times higher than the paperback. Occasionally, but not rarely, there was a 4 to 1 or even 5 to 1 price ratio between the two. The worst offenders are five to seven important university presses, though some commercial publishers also follow this pricing practice.

Since both formats are almost always printed from the same plates, and since, according to some preservationists' recent reviews, the physical quality of hardback bindings is steadily declining, what is the justification for such a large price differential?

PUBLISHER RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Ron Chrisman** (Acquisitions, Syracuse University Press)

From the standpoint of a university press publisher, when publishing in simultaneous formats, the price of a cloth book is approximately twice as much as the price for the paperbound book. At Syracuse University Press, we strive to price our books reasonably, but some-

times several factors may increase the price of a cloth book beyond the 2:1 ratio.

With a simultaneous cloth and paperback printing, the cloth edition will have a shorter print run, such as 400 copies, and will be sold primarily to the library market because it is a sturdy, long-lasting edition. The paperback edition will have a higher print run, such as 2000 copies, and will be sold as an economical edition ideal for use in classrooms. Because we print fewer cloth editions, the unit cost for production is higher, and this necessitates a higher price tag.

When combined with additional factors, such as heavily illustrated or lengthy volume, the cloth price may increase more than twice the cost of a paperback edition. In the several decades of publishing at Syracuse University Press, however, I could find only four examples of a cloth price more than about twice the price of the paperback in a simultaneous cloth and paperback printing. In each case, the book was lengthy, profusely illustrated, and had a small print run, which combined to require a higher price (but only **three** times as much as the paperback edition).

A cloth edition is still a good buy for a high quality, long-lasting book (and I am not aware of declining cloth binding standards, at least at Syracuse). For those five to seven university presses and commercial presses that consistently price their cloth editions more than three times the cost of the paperback edition, the library has the option to buy the paper edition and reinforce it, and thus send a message to the "offending" presses that their excessively-priced cloth editions are not being bought by their intended market.

VENDOR RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Marcia C. Romanansky**, Vice-President, Purchasing/Distribution, Blackwell North America)

The cloth versus paper issue has been "around the library industry" for many years, and the topic periodically resurfaces, especially during times of tight budgets (which currently seems to be "always"). I first visited this topic some time ago when I studied the titles listed in a single issue of *Choice* (May 1990) which were published in simultaneous cloth and paper editions, learning that nearly 12% of the titles were issued as such. The majority of the simultaneous cloth/paper titles were from university presses (57%).

Today, the price difference between cloth and paper, along with the availability of — or at least notice of — both the cloth and paper formats on vendor-supplied plans, seems to be attracting major attention.

Important changes are occurring today in university press publishing. In an effort to boost sales, these publishers have increased their marketing to retail bookstores, and their advertising to the general reader. To be successful — and they certainly have been (there is a considerable number of titles, in fact entire sections of university press publications, currently being featured in higher-end bookstores all over the U.S.) — university presses must offer a paperback version of their most marketable titles. To hold their margins, however, they still want libraries to buy the higher-priced cloth bindings.

To many, the Approval issue appears to center only on providing users with choices when a title is announced as appearing in simultaneous formats. Making some other decisions, however, is a bit more complex. For example, does the library want to "wait" for the announced paperback version of a title or accept the on-hand cloth in order to be timely in the receipt of the title's "contents," because, after all, isn't that what everyone wants?

And, what happens if the promised

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promotional efforts, and this is an area where we are working together. There is a sense that the old antagonisms between us are diminishing, and the realities of a new, more difficult business environment are encouraging publishers and booksellers to recognize the value that each brings to the marketing and distribution of books to libraries.

Eastern Europe is beginning to emerge as a growing market for American books. Publishers are opening editorial and sales offices, especially in relatively stable countries like Hungary and Poland. Inflation is hurting this investment; there is certainly no gold rush mentality. But there are a variety of joint ventures beginning, where primarily British and German publishers are forging relationships with distributors and small presses in these countries. Our company is also finding opportunities to supply American books to these new private companies as the old state book distributors, like Kultura in Hungary and Sklandnleska Knidja in Poland collapse or settle into a slow decline.

The Eastern Europeans are optimistic, despite their serious economic problems. They are making the transition from the old bureaucracy to a new, capitalistic mentality with apparent ease. For instance, one evening Barry dined with the president of the Hungarian Publishers and Booksellers Association, the owner of a new Hungarian art book distribution house, the new Eastern Europe sales representative of Random House, and the owner of a new Polish library distributor. All of these people, friends for many years, used to be in the old state run publishing houses or book distribution companies. Now each of them expressed a new sense of freedom about their lives and work, and, without meaning to sound ethnocentric, an attitude toward the future that can only be described as American.

Librarians would find a few days at the Frankfurt Book Fair a real adventure. They would find, as we did, that interacting with publishers and book people from many countries adds to our knowledge of the book business and broadens us professionally. ☛

Acquiring Minds

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and the values which form the backbone of the copyright laws?

At ALA I talked about the specifics of the case to a small number of people who are involved with selection in this subject. They all felt that librarians should know about what happened and that they collectively should demand that the publisher replace their copies of the original book with the new edition.

Do librarians have a right to know that they have in their collections [is] a plagiarized work? If so, how are they to be informed? What further action should then be taken by librarians?

As a footnote, let me mention that I am acquainted with the other author only through telephone conversations which occurred during the composition of his book; we have never met face to face. What an interesting encounter that would be now. It's a small world — it's bound to happen some day. I wonder whose heart and stomach will go plunging into the gut on that occasion. . . ☛

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paperback version is never published or published by a press other than the one which issued the cloth version? Further, should an on-hand cloth edition be returned when librarians learn that there is a paperback available or "announced"? Will the marketplace accept a different discount schedule on paperbacks as has traditionally been the practice?

The bottom line — at least to this librarian/bookseller — is service, service to my customers and to the librarians. In general, I recommend buying the first available issue — usually cloth — of a title when it is central to the library's collection and using subsequent paperback editions for added copies and to expand peripheral areas where cloth editions would be outside the budget. Real costs are related, not only to the item purchased, but also to the expenses incurred in making the purchase. Searching for a less-expensive edition and controlling its acquisitions may, in fact, be "more expensive" than buying a title just once in its life cycle. A successful product (read service for this discussion), begins with a good purchase. ☛

Off the Wall

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(1) *Online Journal of Current Clinical Trials*; *Science* (insert card); *Science* reprints. (2) Includes employment ads in a special section on *Women in Science*. (3) Includes ads in section called *Technical Marketplace*. (4) *Journal of Biological Chemistry* on CD; *The Scientist*. (5) *Chemtech*; *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry*; *J. Chemical and Engineering Data*. ☛

Look At Issues

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Service Charges and Buying Direct. We are seeing a trend of many publishers to try to entice libraries to buy direct. This enticement is coming through deeper discounts to libraries that purchase direct and, in many cases, telemarketing directly to librarians. At the same time, publishers have reduced discounts to some of our service providers like subscription agents. Most of us agree that we need a central source to process our orders rather than working through a myriad of publishers at different times of the year. But, will we be forced to "put our money where our mouth is"? That is, will we have to pay service charges or increased service charges in order to garner this service? As monies dry up all around, unfortunately this seems more and more likely.

Have a good Thanksgiving and vacation season. Things always seem better after a vacation. And Happy New Year! ☛

